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Representations from the Past: Social Relations and the Devolution of Social Representations

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Abstract Psychological life is subject to the influence of a constructed and potentially reconstituted past, as well as to future anticipated outcomes and expectations. Human behaviour occurs along a temporal trajectory that marks the projects individuals adopt in their quests of human action. Explanations of social behaviour are limited insofar as they exclude a historical concern with human purpose. In this paper, we draw on Bartlett's notion of collective remembering to argue that manifest social relations are rooted in past events that give present behaviours meaning and justification. We further propose an epidemiological time-series framework for social representations, that are conceptualised as evolving over time and that are subject to a 'ratchet effect' that perpetuates meaning in a collective. We argue that understanding forms of social behaviour that draw on lay explanations of social relations requires a deconstructive effort that maps the evolutionary trajectory of a representational project in terms of its adaptation over time. We go on to illustrate our proposal visiting data that emerged in an inquiry investigating Maltese immigrants' perspectives towards their countries of settlement and origin. This data reveals an assimilationist acculturation preference amongst the Maltese in Britain that seems incongruous with the current climate of European integration and Maltese communities in other countries around the world. We demonstrate that a historical concern with regard to this apparent behaviour helps explain how Maltese immigrants to Britain opt for certain forms of intercultural relations than others that are normally

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preferable. We demonstrate that these preferences rely on an evolved justification of the Maltese getting by with foreign rulers that other scholars have traced back to the medieval practice of chivalry.

Keywords Social psychology · Intercultural relations · History · Collective remembering · Social values · Acculturation · Assimilation · Social representations

Representations from the Past: Social Relations and the Devolution of Social Representations

The epidemiological study of ideas has featured prominently in memetic (Dawkins 1976) accounts of culture (Sperber 1990). This analytical framework proposes that ideas can spread through a population, jumping from mind to mind much the same as biological entities like viruses or genes spread through a human population. Consequently, their epidemiological progress can be chartered by mapping the spread of ideas. The critical problem with this approach is that, unlike genes or viruses, ideas are not readily distinguishable from each other. Wilson and Sperber (1981) argue that this process is more a matter of inference than it is of replication. Ideas, beliefs, and lay understandings, in other words social representations that are in some sense shared amongst a collective (Chryssides et al. 2009), provide meaning with regard to aspects of social life and purpose to social projects. Both meaning and purpose are amenable to change over time as communities adapt to changes in their ecological environments. In this paper we propose a time-series evolutionary model of social representations that is based on adaptation and that, in inferring the evolutionary trajectory of a social representation over changing times, serves in understanding contemporary phenomena in terms of community projects serving a community's changing needs. More specifically, our focus in this paper pertains to social representations that constitute the social memory of a community and that serve to provide a pronounced identity value describing the history of a group and its relations to other groups. We go on to apply this model to a case analysis of immigrant relations particular to the Maltese community in Britain that appear anomalous in terms of current intercultural theories that focus on acculturation preferences and strategies (Berry 2011).

Social Representations Over Time

Social representations may be defined as community objectifications that constitute, for that community, a *sui generis* social reality (Moscovici 2000). This conception of social representations points to the fact that these objectifications are a matter of social construction. It prescribes the idea that for constructions to come into being they require a shared systemic reality (Chryssides et al. 2009), as opposed to a relativistic individual positioning with regards to some objectification. For instance, as Asch (1952) argued, a society cannot have multiple objectifications of what constitutes a crime. Social representations thus constitute a relatively stable community knowledge ("*sensus communis"*) in a shared cultural context (Jovchelovitch 2007), that is, an interobjective common-sense (Sammut et al. 2010).

The ontological interobjectivity of social representations is framed in Bauer and Gaskell's (1999) 'toblerone' model. Social representations can be understood as interobjective inasmuch as they constitute a non-conscious common background of intelligibility according to which two or more subjects structure their social relations (Daanen and Sammut 2012). This background of intelligibility, whilst being socially constructed in itself, is assumed by interlocutors as objective standard to the extent that it is deemed common-sense (Jovchelovitch 2007). Violations of the background of intelligibility in social relations are problematic in that they are perceived as unreasonable from an objective point of view. On the other hand, routine and non-problematic interaction takes place in ways that conform to the standard regardless of individual dispositions, such that interaction proceeds in line with a socially constructed objectivity (i.e. interobjectivity) that prescribes appropriate forms of interaction.

In the toblerone model, social representations are held to exist systemically across a minimal triad of two subjects concerned with an object. In this triad, the relation between these entities defines how "in the object, the project of the subjects is represented; or how in the subjects the object appears in relation to a project; or how the project links the subjects and object" (p. 168). What is noteworthy about this is that a social representation is not conceived of as a static objectification that holds for a given people at a particular point in time. Rather, it is conceptualised as a community project that extends over time. The notion of temporality is critical for the present purpose, as it denotes a trajectory for how an objectification not only comes to exist, but survives after it has sprung into existence. Furthermore, change in the objectification is inherent in this model, as the content of a representation varies at different time intervals by way of an elaboration of meaning across time. This element of the model has an added implication in that it accords subjects participant in a social representation with agency to determine the project the social representation achieves. Whilst much research in social representations adopts a societal level of analysis (Wagner and Hayes 2005), the actions human subjects undertake in their routine affairs, such as with whom and with whom not to seek association, enact social representations and bring community projects into being.

The aspect of functional changes of social representations has been elaborated further in Central Nucleus Theory (CNT) (Abric 1993, 2001). CNT posits that social representations are constituted by a structured network of values, beliefs, and ideas. Some beliefs and ideas are central to the representation's meaning and constitute inviolable precepts that form the representation's core. The representation would not be the same representation without these critical elements. In addition, however, social representations include peripheral elements that are made up of other values, beliefs, and ideas, and that may transpire more readily under inquiry, but that are disposable and serve merely to adapt the social representation to some current context. In the event that a social representation is challenged by some arising matter, such as a change in circumstances or an innovation (Sammut and Bauer 2011), the representation survives by adapting its meaning to the new circumstance. In doing so, it might relegate peripheral elements and incorporate new ones, but this process also ensures that the core elements of a representation survive. The structural study of social representations commonly relies on statistical techniques, such as Hierarchical Cluster Analysis (HCA), that investigate clusters of beliefs that constitute a social

representation at a given point in time. Those beliefs and ideas that form a coherent and central structure are considered to constitute the representation's nucleus. These can be studied longitudinally to analyse how the beliefs constituting a representation change over time, by mapping which beliefs are shed and which are incorporated as the representation adapts to changing realities. However, it is worth noting that such studies map only peripheral changes in the representation that enable the core beliefs to survive over time. The core elements constituting the nucleus are persistent, and if these change or they themselves become peripheral, then this would indicate a new social representation with a new and different nucleus. In CNT, the content aspect of a social representation is defined by its persistent core over time.

Taken together, these two models (i.e., 'toblerone' and 'CNT') describe how social representations evolve over time after they have sprung to existence. Both models incorporate a temporal dimension into their formulation of what social representations are, and both models suggest that social representations evolve by adapting to changing circumstances. CNT adopts a structural approach to social representations, by identifying which beliefs persist despite adaptation. The toblerone model, on the other hand, adopts a pragmatic approach by focusing on the project that a social representation materialises for a community. In any case, once they are brought to life, social representations define social reality for the collective they espouse, and we argue that this is a key, if often neglected, element in the study of social representations.

Many studies of social representations take the form of studying the meaning of some phenomenon for a particular collective at a given point in time (Wagner and Hayes 2005). The reference to a social representation's evolving character in these models, however, is more than cursory. Representations change over time as they adapt to changing circumstances. Adaptation ensures a social representations' survival over time. The principles that govern the life of social representations are thus evolutionary in nature. And insofar as social representations constitute a community project that is subject to evolution through adaptation across time, then the surviving core of a representation is *inferable* over time. A further observation that stems from the present discussion is the fact that over time, social representations may be subject to a 'ratchet effect' (Tomasello 1999), in that when an original representation changes as a function of adaptation to a new reality, the emergent characteristics of the 'new' representation are carried over in time and utilised in the construction of meaning of past and present events. In what follows, we will further explore the temporal dynamics of social representations in relation to work on collective remembering.

Collective Remembering

The term "collective memory" was coined by Maurice Halbwachs (1925) to describe the way in which different social groups share, recollect and transmit memories amongst members of the group. In his book *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (abridged and translated as *On Collective Memory*), Halbwachs analyzes how families, religious and class groups develop and maintain particular social frameworks of memory. A social framework is a series of condensed images of the past and a structure to give them meaning.

This notion clearly parallels Moscovici's (2000) description of social representations as composed of figure and symbol, corresponding to the processes of 'objectification' and 'anchoring' respectively. In relation to the first process, Halbwachs discusses how families develop distinctive ways of talking about themselves and their members. Particular stories told and retold about members sum up their character in a condensed image, even after their death. Language is a critical mechanism by which individual experience is linked to social frameworks. Through naming and categorizing, social frameworks enable the differentiation of individual experience into meaningful social forms. Like social representations, social frameworks are interobjective, and through them the past can be transmitted beyond the lifetime of anyone.

Social memories evolve to meet the particular demands of their present situation. Assman (2010) identifies two forms of memory, that is, 'communicative' and 'cultural' memory. The former refers to the informal traditions of memory as manifest in everyday communication and diffuse in structure, whereas the latter is formal, ceremonial, guarded by specialists in hierarchical role structures, and highly mediated by texts, icons, rituals and performances. There is also a difference in time-scale: communicative memory has a horizon of 80–100 years or 3–4 generations, while cultural memory reaches into the absolute past, creating a mythical history. Memories of religious groups, as described by Halbwachs, clearly tend more to cultivate 'cultural' memory than 'communicative' memory. Our primary interest in this paper is, however, communicative memory.

An analysis of how 'communicative' memory evolves over time is provided by the seminal work of Frederic Bartlett (1932) on reproduction of folk stories by different groups who were unfamiliar with the stories. Contra Ebbinghaus (1885), Bartlett concluded that any new experience is perceived and remembered against the background of previous experience, stressing that remembering has an irreducibly social dimension. Bartlett (1923, pp. 12–13) argues that, "It is only if we interpret individual to mean pre-social that we can take psychology to be prehistoric. The truth is that there are some individual responses which simply do not occur outside a social group". Following Halbwachs, Bartlett refers to the background of past experience as 'social frameworks', but also uses 'active developing patterns' and 'organized settings', to emphasize their situated and dynamic character. Bartlett's (1932) work on remembering explores the parallels between cultural transmission at a group level and remembering at an individual level, and discusses the ways in which social groups reconstruct their traditions—noting that remembering occurs *in* the group and not *by* the group. In his analysis of cultural dynamics, Bartlett (1923) explores how social groups evolve through cultural contact. All groups have 'cultural patterns' distinctive to them, which guide the 'borrowing' and 'blending' of cultural elements when they come into contact with other groups. Groups tend to selectively preserve old elements by way of constantly adapting the new. In this way, cultural patterns retain their continuity through their 'plastic'. Even in extreme cases, such as forced conversion to Christianity, new cultural elements may retain the significance of the old, thus preserving the cultural patterns of the group at a deeper level. For example, Bartlett (1925) described how long after the Spanish conquest and conversion of the inhabitants of New Guinea, Christian religious paraphernalia were found being offered to the 'overthrown' deities. It is this flexible way in which a group's values and traditions are actively and

continuously adapted to present conditions, thereby both preserved and changed, that we wish to explore in what follows.

Values are important elements of cultural and social interpretative frameworks (Tsirogianni and Gaskell 2011). What aspects of past events are made salient in the exercise of remembering and interpreting past events is guided by what a community holds as significant and worthy. Some events or interpretations are held onto and become part of the social firmament whereas others are forgotten. Beliefs and interpretations that stick are beliefs and interpretations that are valued for what project they represent. In this way, social values imbue social representations with worth for a community at some point in time.

The construction of social representations that make past events meaningful for a community's present purposes, is thus a deeply value-laden process transmitted across generations and time, and used as a standard to evaluate past and present goals, events, and states of affairs. Social representations are thus value-laden carriers of collective memory. Beliefs are the ingredients that make up social representations, and some beliefs pertain to past events and their understanding by a community. As we seek to demonstrate in this paper, these beliefs, in their turn, serve as a framework of interpretation for new or present events, and as such, they ensure the primacy of "the past over the present, response over the stimuli and images over 'reality'" (Moscovici 2000, p. 37).

The Epidemiological Time-Series Model

The approach we would like to advance in this paper presents a theoretical perspective for explaining social behaviour in terms of a historical evolution of ideas and values that imbue current objectifications of the world with remnants from the past. We have argued that this requires a historical focus (see also Knights this issue). We recognise that this proposal is not a straightforward affair, in that the scientific credentials associated with such an undertaking may yet require establishment. The historical record, in the social sciences, is largely considered to be interpretative and subjective and bound to the sociocultural context in which it is produced more so than it is bound to the sociocultural context it seeks to describe. Historical representation is a representation from someone's point of view that is in itself contingent on the socio-historical circumstances of its production. For this reason, the historical record is yet to achieve the status of scientific credibility. The risk associated with this enterprise is that we might be reconstructing particular versions of history that suit our analytical purposes. On the other hand, such limitations do not detract from the theoretical requirement of looking at the past trajectory of a representational project, as we will seek to do in our case analysis hereunder. Our analysis demonstrates the merits of such an undertaking in explaining social behaviour that is otherwise anomalous given the present state of social psychological theory and explanation.

The second point we advance in this paper is the proposition of a ratchet effect for social representations. We have argued that meaning evolves through time, and each adaptation ensures the representation's survival, exercising an influence on present social relations through collective remembering that brings to such relations remnants

from the past. This point is consequential in two respects. Firstly, contemporary social relations cannot be understood solely in terms of the present. Circumstances that bring people into social relations in the present may constitute a present crossing-over of historical trajectories that represent different projects and that may be leading different communities in completely different directions. Understanding present social relations, therefore, clearly requires an appreciation of both historical circumstances and future aspirations, and a present conflict or cooperative effort may not accurately represent similar historical convergence. This point may be a somewhat obvious remark when discussing issues such as conflict resolution, but we find that such 'historicity' is largely overlooked in contemporary models and explanations of social behaviour. We realise that not all social representations studies will benefit from a historical focus, but, we argue, some do and for these we seek to describe a rationale for doing so. The second point that ensues from our proposed ratchet effect is that the identification of core and peripheral elements of a social representation may also transpire under historical analysis. Tracing the evolution and adaptation of a social representation is an interpretative exercise that needs to be taken into account in describing a social representation. In our view, methods that base a distinction of core and peripheral elements on structured semiotic relations of present beliefs may be somewhat misguided, as the core of a representation is the stable set of beliefs that adapts and survives over time, as opposed to a clustered set at some particular point in time.

In what follows, we proceed to apply our model to a case study of Maltese migrants in London. We explore the ways time has shaped the meanings of certain values, their interrelationships and their linkage to cultural identities for Maltese immigrants relative to their compatriots. Intercultural relations amongst communities can be a source of enrichment as well as discord due to divergences in worldviews and cultural practices. At times different communities seem able to get along, while at other times relations break down into outright hostility. Immigrant communities are commonly held to pursue integration, assimilation, separation, or marginalization acculturation strategies in establishing relations with host communities (Berry 2011). Two of these strategies are relevant for the present paper. Acculturation strategies that involve a positive valence towards the host country alternate between *integration* and *assimilation* (Berry 2011). Integration refers to a strategy that maintains positive relations with one's country of origin, whereas assimilation refers to an acculturation strategy that seeks dissociation from native folk. These acculturation strategies, however, are not invariable. Though it has been argued that integration is the best form of multicultural policy (Berry 2011), such a strategy may not be the preferred option for particular communities at particular points in time.

In the following case study we note an anomalous finding regarding acculturation preferences amongst the Maltese community in London that emerged in a recent study undertaken by the first author. During interviews, respondents invariably expressed a preference for assimilation. What is anomalous about this finding is that Maltese immigrants across the world set up sizeable communities elsewhere such that today, Maltese quarters can be found in places like New York, Melbourne and Toronto. By contrast, no such well-established community exists presently in Britain, despite a similar wave of Maltese migration to this country after the Second World War. This, however, was not always the case. A sizeable Maltese community sprang up in London after the war that eventually disintegrated due to well-documented circumstances that

we revisit hereunder (see Dench 1975), in which the community became associated with criminality. Whilst these events are long-forgotten by Londoners, Maltese migrants to Britain seemingly retain an understanding of these events in their collective remembering that shapes their present lack of community relations and that justifies their preference for assimilation in this particular context and not elsewhere. Our explanation for the particularity of this finding has to do with the historicity of social representations over time, which we discussed above. Our proposal is that psychological life has continuity and is subject to the influence of a constructed and potentially reconstituted past, as well as to future anticipated outcomes and expectations (Harre and van Langenhove 1999). We argue that explanations that fail to consider historicity are limited insofar as they exclude a concern with human purpose. As we demonstrate hereunder, understanding forms of social behaviour that draw on lay explanations of social relations requires a deconstructive effort that maps the evolutionary trajectory of a representational project in terms of its adaptation over time.

Case Study: Community relations amongst the Maltese in London

As noted above, objectifications of aspects of the world structure social relations in terms of inherently meaningful behaviour for a community, which meaning is in itself an evolved structure of beliefs and ideas, remnants of past projects in which the community was engaged, and which survived changing sociohistorical circumstances. Accordingly, any understanding of currently manifest social behaviour requires an appraisal of evolved meaning that is specific to a particular community, and that pertains to its particular collective life over its own personal history. We proceed to present data that emerged in a recent study investigating the perspectives of Maltese immigrants to the United Kingdom in the wake of European integration that illustrates this account. We adopt a two-pronged approach to our case study. We start by presenting data that demonstrates an assimilationist theme across respondents. We draw on interview data to demonstrate how the Maltese retain a scepticism for association with their fellow counterparts. We then proceed to present a case study of a respondent who in his long-standing settlement in Britain and negotiation of relations with locals as well as fellow countrymen over the years, presents clues as to why the Maltese may treat their fellow immigrants with suspicion. The case we present bridges the present state of affairs of the Maltese community in Britain with its disintegration in the sixties, as documented by Dench (1975). We then proceed to revisit Dench's anthropological inquiry that draws extensively on the historical record in accounting for the disintegration of the Maltese community in London during the sixties. We conclude that for a context-specific understanding of social relations, history and social psychology can be bridged in an epidemiological time-series model that maps the adaptation of ideas over time and across different projects up to the point of providing a justification for contemporary social behaviour that is incongruous with the present state of acculturation theory.

Study 1: Maltese Migrants to Britain

The present study involved forty qualitative in-depth interviews with Maltese migrants to Britain, some of whom had re-patriated, and was undertaken over the

last and first quarters of 2008 and 2009 respectively. The study queried into the various points of view of immigrants with regards to their host country and their country of origin. Methodological details and findings that demonstrate variances across point of view types (Sammut & Gaskell 2010) have been published elsewhere (see Sammut 2010, 2012). The present data, however, was consistent and invariable across the various points of view, regardless of whether respondents expressed a preference for life in Britain or life in Malta, of whether they aimed at returning to Malta or settling in Britain, and regardless of whether their views towards Malta and Britain could be typified as open or closed-minded (Sammut & Gaskell 2010). Regardless of the variable types, respondents expressed a preference for limited interaction with fellow Maltese immigrants, and argued that had they wanted the company of fellow Maltese they would have stayed in Malta. For this reason they did not actively seek out other Maltese people during their stay in Britain. Whereas for a lot of immigrants, native communities are a source of support and social capital in a foreign land (Sammut 2012; Sammut et al. 2012), respondents chose to do away with such support and relied only on their own resources.

> it was just us, no one really helped […] we didn't search for support, no one ever saw me in the worst of times. (Respondent 7).

Respondent 12 provides a clue as to why this might be the case:

> the primary source of support is mostly ourselves; we're not the type to seek support outside of our nucleus; we're an independent type; no one helped us to settle, we knew people but we wanted to do it ourselves; the only help we got were services that we paid for, we didn't seek support […] it wasn't easy but I'd rather do it like that; otherwise you get obliged and I don't like to be in that situation. (Respondent 12).

The desire to make it on their own and to avoid community relations seems to have underlined respondents' desire for assimilation, for fear of incurring obligations with fellow Maltese that could turn sour. Looking at the historical underpinnings of this relational approach, they are placing importance on the values of honour and autonomy, which as we saw have historical significance and are central to the Maltese identity. But they are doing this at the expense of security, by emphasising the need to gain control over their lives and affirming their agency without any help from the community despite the difficulty of this endeavour. At the same time, they affirm the value of autonomy by opening themselves to the diversity and opportunities that British culture offers them. Both of these findings are in line with those outlined by Dench (1975) and may be particular to the Maltese community in Britain. The goal of assimilation as well as the scepticism directed towards fellow countrymen, was reiterated across respondents:

> there are Maltese people here but I don't seek them out; maybe because I know they're not my type. (Respondent 32).
> I know Maltese who have been here but didn't integrate; we want to integrate now that we're here, we want to be part of this community now, that's why we came here. (Respondent 25).

Efforts at building community that are instigated by the Malta High Commission in London in partnership with the Maltese Culture Movement (an association of long-time immigrants to the UK, who migrated to Britain around the sixties), due to this deep-seated scepticism, go largely unheeded. Many respondents do not participate in such initiatives at all, whilst others participate for functional reasons.

> I do participate in Maltese cultural events but they are a tad antiquated, I participate to buy pastizzi[1], rather than to participate in a Maltese feast. (Respondent 4).

The event Respondent 4 refers to in this excerpt is Malta Day, held annually in Westminster Cathedral in London on the 8th of September. The event involves a religious mass (Catholic), and a street procession with a brass-band and fireworks bearing a statue of Our Lady of Victory. Similar feasts are held annually in Malta over summer in every Maltese village, paying homage to the local patron saint, and a replication of a feast is officially organized each year. The event attracts a number of Maltese residing in Britain, but it has failed to stimulate community. The event is better attended indoors, where Maltese food items are sold and where visitors socialise with each other in an annex to Westminster cathedral, than when the celebration is subsequently taken to the streets. When the first author attended one such event, the congregation withered once the community event became visible to the outside by way of a street procession. Many attendees did not join the ranks of the procession, even if they had made an effort to get to the event. Rather, they stood by the side and became onlookers, just like locals pacing the streets around Westminster who happened upon the event and stopped to take a look. Others, rather than joining the procession in line as is customary in Malta, opted for distance by following the route across the other side of the road. Additionally, very few young generation immigrants joined the procession at all. Most participants, once the community event became public, were older migrants who presumably moved to Britain at the time of Dench's inquiry.

It seems, therefore, that whilst participants are drawn to a community event that celebrates their country of origin, for some reason some of them are loathe of making their affiliation with this community public. It seems that older generation immigrants are less wary than younger ones. This might be due to the fact that older aged Maltese immigrants to Britain may be subject to stereotypes that the Maltese hold of the Maltese in Britain and the communities that existed there at the time of Dench's investigation, lodged in collective remembering of the Maltese. This is evident in the following extract, where Respondent 10 expresses a wariness of association with fellow Maltese. Respondent 10 did not seek out Maltese community and she did not attend Maltese cultural events even if these were easily accessible to her due to geographical proximity.

> maybe this is a stereotype, but I met someone who's been here 40 years and he was boasting on a plane that he got rabbits[2] from Malta. The fact that the Maltese here are proud of these things, I think they're closed-minded. If you

[1] Typical indigenous Maltese pasties

[2] Farmed rabbits are a Maltese delicacy and commonly regarded as the national dish

> have to be proud of Malta you can be proud of different things. After all these years is this how you show off? And I associate the Maltese community with that stereotype. (Respondent 10).

These findings are rather surprising given the different ways respondents acquire the ability to fit in and find a balance between the values of tradition and openness to change and diversity. For example, respondent 1 stated that her life in Britain has improved markedly ever since a few other Maltese acquaintances of hers also moved to Britain, as these have now come to constitute her social network. Respondent 37 claimed that for her, fellow Maltese in Britain were her 'extended family'. And respondent 35 argued that whilst she does not fit in with the Maltese in Malta, the Maltese in Britain are different from the Maltese in Malta. One would therefore have expected similar differences in the acculturation objectives of different respondents, but no evidence for this emerged in the course of this inquiry. On the other hand, and equally surprisingly, there was also no evidence for significant culture loss amongst the respondents, despite their common desire for assimilation. Respondents retained their ability to converse in the Maltese language, identified themselves as Maltese, displayed Maltese artifacts in their homes, and stayed in touch with Maltese affairs and Maltese networks, particularly their families. Even the staunchest assimilationist respondents made it a point to keep contact with their families and to remember events such as the birthdays of friends and relatives.

Study 2: The Case of Bertu

Bertu was a long-term immigrant to the UK. Bertu was in his seventies and living in an independent-living retirement community. He had migrated to London when in his twenties, over 50 years before the interview. In that time, he had brought up his family in Britain, but had retained Maltese roots. He described himself strongly and unequivocally as Maltese, although he claimed he belonged in both countries. He had retained exclusive Maltese citizenship, he boasted of his ability to converse in the Maltese language, he described himself as "*Maltese through and through*", and he flew back regularly to both visit his family and support his local football team in important matches:

> do not feel British; why should I; I act like Maltese, I speak Maltese; I can speak to you Maltese like normal [interview was conducted in English] … I do not feel Britainised; I've been here 50 years, I speak the language, I meet British people, I like British things, football, but only because I'm here; if I were in Malta I'd be into Maltese things

Voicing a degree of nostalgia about Malta, Bertu argued that:

> when it's your country it's your country, my family is there, my mother, my brother, my brother is buried in Malta, we have a family grave; don't know where I will be buried; when it comes to things like this I like it

Bertu had at one point taken his family back to Malta but his wife, who was foreign, had found it difficult to settle due to the fact that their household income had been relatively low. He claimed that had circumstances been different, they may well

have stayed. Bertu claimed he had no problems fitting in Malta, despite the time he had been away, because he was Maltese and still had acquaintances there.

Describing his early years in Britain and how he was able to draw on the network he got going when he moved to Britain, Bertu claimed that:

> at first I had problems being Maltese here; like you're not wanted in this country; but as you start working you find it's not as bad; I thought it would be worse, like taking their jobs; I coped because I mixed with people, if I didn't; English people are very racist but when you mix, they know you're foreigner but when you mix you're accepted; there's no problem when foreigners integrate

He then went on to claim that:

> I got friends, not many many, mostly British; I make friends straight away; I can walk in anywhere and make friends […] English people helped me in the first few years, they used to take me places, I was given space, I found them very nice people, they respect you

Asked about his relations with fellow Maltese immigrants in Britain, Bertu reiterates much of the claims made by other respondents in justification for ditching community relations. His discourse echoes a conflict between the values of openness to change and diversity and tradition. He draws both on Maltese and British cultural resources to talk about his identity as a migrant and affirms the central role both tradition and openness to change play in his identity. But in his attempt to resolve this incompatibility, Bertu did not draw on the values of security and honour. For him it is the tension between tradition and openness to diversity/autonomy that features prominently in his decision to distance himself from the Maltese community, evoking feelings of disappointment and sadness rather than shame. He lamented the fact that he did not have any at present, but did so in the following way:

> I didn't like the Maltese here, it seemed like they didn't change, they lived like they did in Malta and I didn't like that, I wanted to integrate … I'm not saying it's wrong, but I didn't like it. I made some Maltese friends after a couple of years, I joined the Maltese club, we used to go dancing, used to organise things and get together, but now I'm cut off, everyone went their separate ways … it's a shame we don't have community here, but the ones I described they stayed Maltese, whereas I talk to everybody. I used to meet Maltese people and then find out they were no good, so I'd steer clear … it was exaggerated in the papers [referring to the criminal events that marked the community in the sixties]

Despite the fact that he had resided away from Malta twice the time he had resided there, Bertu's Maltese roots remained uncompromised and, sitting up from the sofa he was sitting on during the interview, he affirmed that were his daughter to go there, he would "*pack up and leave right now*".

The assimilationist preferences expressed by respondents in this study could have suggested either 'push' factors that were motivating respondents to flee their country of origin, or 'pull' factors that were drawing them to their host country (Berry et al. 2002) to the extent that they were inclined to shed their original culture. As we demonstrate in our case analysis hereunder, however, this is not the case. In light of

historical conditions that we proceed to revisit and that Dench (1975) traces back to Medieval times and the practice of concubinage, we argue that these circumstances historically provided the Maltese the opportunity to enact the values of security, autonomy and honour, that centuries later become a source of conflict for the Maltese in Britain, as they are anchored in memories about the sex industry in Valletta and its exportation to London and consequently the Maltese community there. This kind of conflict is fraught with feelings of shame and the respondents in the case study detailed above resolved it by disengaging themselves from the Maltese community that was viewed as a threat to these values.

Case History: The Maltese Community in London

The Maltese established a sizable native community in London in the sixties and seventies, following mass migration from the country after the second world war. Malta was a British dominion at the time, so the Maltese had freedom of travel and residence in the UK. The Maltese also embarked on mass migration to Australia and Canada at the time, and Maltese communities in those countries survive to date. However, the Maltese community in London perished towards the end of the seventies. As noted, the details of this have been extensively documented by Dench (1975).

Dench investigated the Maltese community in London in an effort to understand processes that lead to the erosion of ethnic consciousness. Dench documented how the Maltese community withered following a string of events that brought the community under attack from the national media in Britain. In particular, these had to do with the fact that members of the Maltese community were involved in an organised vice network offering mostly sexual entertainment. According to Dench, in consequence, "Among a community with a generally bad reputation, the Maltese had a specifically bad name" (1975, p. 71). Dench estimates that at the time of his inquiry, as much as a quarter of settlers were serving or had served prison terms, with the completed criminality rate being[3] being higher yet. Dench's interest in studying the community preceded the press crusade against the Maltese, after noting that some Maltese immigrants not only did not make an effort to engage with their native community, but went to great lengths not to. The Maltese community disintegrated after significant hostile press and following a revision of laws regarding sexual services. Curbs in immigration following Malta's independence from the UK meant that the community could not be sustainably replenished.

In his efforts to map the erosion of Maltese community in Britain, Dench (1975) charted the origins of this same community. According to Dench, due to the extent of damages experienced in World War II, Malta precipitated into recession leading to widespread poverty and mass migration. Migration agreements were established, as noted, with Australia and Canada that saw numerous skilled workers emigrate to these countries. Others opted to take their chances in Britain. The British garrison provided Malta with a significant economic boost after the war, as sailors required all sorts of supplies to sustain the significant military presence. Amongst

[3] The chance of being convicted at some time during settlement

these were those of an entertainment kind. The Grand Harbour region in Malta, particularly the capital city Valletta, became hubs of entertainment for British troops. The local workers who served in this industry were often unskilled and uneducated individuals with little reasonable prospects of alternative employment. Through working in this industry, they came to develop ties with the British and learn enough of the language to take their chances in migrating to Britain. In Britain, these individuals did the same as they had done in Malta. They flocked to the docklands in London and established a cafe society that provided culinary and sexual services to visiting sailors that, to their mind, the British supposedly acceded. In the absence of a regulated industry of sex entertainment in Britain at the time, these individuals prospered. According to Dench, this state of affairs led to the community attracting seasoned criminals from Malta to work in the pimping trade and mastermind a vice-network that would eventually attract the loathe of the public and the hand of the law.

Dench's (1975) study is a masterful anthropological inquiry into ethnic consciousness. In his studies, Dench visited Malta to investigate the situation in its origin. He documents how in Maltese society, the habits displayed by the Maltese community in Britain were as, if not more, despicable. According to Dench, the moral regulation exercised by the Catholic Church in Malta condemned the satisfaction of sexual desires. The proferring of such services to foreign and wealthy British troops was, however, condoned. In a collapsed economy following extensive calamity brought about by the second world war, the sex industry became a means for some to survive.

Dench noted double-standards that applied to the sexual consummation of intimate relations in the case of foreigners and Maltese, and inquired into the nature of this excusation. He traces the roots of this double standard through historical records to medieval times when the country was ruled by The Knights of the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta. At the time, Malta was similarly ruled by a foreign order made up of armed, wealthy, and foreign troops who were similarly engaged in protecting the country's sovereignty through armed conflict. The local population similarly suffered and benefitted from favours bestowed by this foreign occupation. In more specific terms, a characteristic form of interpersonal and intimate relations emerged between these monks, sworn to celibate chastity, and young, attractive ladies from the local population. At the time, chivalric love was condoned. Its expressed, if often unpracticed, ideal was an intimate and noble love that was supposedly transcendental. Chivalric love could not be consummated between husband and wife due to its spoiling through sexual intercourse. Concubinage, on the other hand, provided locals the mechanism to preserve and enact values of economic security as well as family honour, insofar as it was meant to be asexual. The idea, therefore, that privation could be alleviated through intimate relations with chivalrous, foreign rulers was, to the population, a grace that would save them from poverty as well as the throes of the enemy and allow them to enact the value of autonomy, and has its origin in these noble aspirations. The idea would, according to Dench, centuries later justify the sex industry in Valletta along with its exportation to Britain by the Maltese community in the sixties and seventies, when the value of security would be implemented in ways that would come into conflict with the value of honour.

Case Analysis

The trail of an idea imbued with social values, as posited by Dench, from medieval times through to erotic entertainment in the aftermath of the second world war, to its culmination in a ring of prostitution amongst the Maltese community in Britain in the sixties and seventies, is undoubtedly astounding. Moreover, it is certainly open to critical interpretation, not least due to the fact that it relies for evidence on the historical record, as well as the fact that the actual behaviour involved was a noble, transcendental aspiration in its origin, but a mark of depravity in its later expression. And yet, this trail of an idea helps explain not only the double standard noted by Dench (1975) amongst the Maltese in Malta themselves, it further explains the seemingly inherent criminality of the Maltese community in Britain in the sixties. More important to the present cause, it explains the bipolar anomaly of contemporary community relations amongst the Maltese in Britain. On the one hand, Maltese immigrants are fond and proud of their native country, whilst on the other hand they are loathe to socialise with fellow Maltese.

In acculturation studies, such a state presents a stark anomaly in two respects. Firstly, it is clear that whilst respondents are disinclined to associate with fellow Maltese in Britain, they are not similarly inclined to disassociate with their compatriots elsewhere, so much so that they regularly travel to Malta and strive to keep their Maltese networks alive. The case of Bertu is most illustrative, in that despite ample opportunity for naturalisation, despite having lived twice as long in Britain as he did in Malta, and despite the possibility afforded him of dual citizenship, throughout the years he retained an exclusively Maltese passport that he proudly displayed to the researcher because he retained himself Maltese. Nevertheless, in his own time, Bertu admittedly steered clear of fellow Maltese when he found out they were up to no good, and he remains to date without any association with fellow native migrants. Secondly, no similar such relations have been recorded in other Maltese communities in other countries. One cannot, therefore, ascribe the efforts to dissociate from Maltese community to immigrant culture-shedding due to some problematic aspect of Maltese identity in general, as this would otherwise transpire also in these other Maltese immigrant communities.

We suggest that the explanation of distancing efforts is perhaps better attributable to the collective remembering of the Maltese and their ideas of their compatriots who went to Britain to scrape a living in unsanctioned ways. Honour and security transpire as important values in Dench's investigation as well as in the present studies and emerge as valued elements of Maltese history and identity. Concubinage in medieval times was a way to achieve security through honourable means. Yet from the contemporary Maltese migrants' perspective, honour was relegated in favour of autonomy and security through the activities their compatriots engaged in during the years following World War II. So while these values are central in the Maltese tradition, they lead to tensions when they are anchored in the memory of compatriots' activities. Seemingly, to avoid placing a value on depravity as well as to maintain autonomy, Maltese immigrants draw a sharp distinction between themselves and the community. Respondents referred to Maltese cultural events in Britain as antiquated, and that Maltese immigrants are proud of their Malteseness in wrong ways. Bertu was ambivalent in relating with the Maltese community at its infamous time. He at once

says that he joined the Maltese club and used to meet regularly with fellow Maltese and go dancing, as well as that 'it' [Maltese criminality in Britain] was exaggerated in the press, whilst at the same time saying that he was different from them and that he would find out that they were up to no good. The Maltese in Britain recognise the self-descriptive social representation of the Maltese as morally corruptible if it comes to scraping a living. They recognise themselves, as Maltese, such and so. They then strive to distance themselves from this representation by shunning community relations, whilst at the same time seeking proximity with the Maltese through oft-visitation.

In these accounts of Maltese migration to Britain, and given the historical context documented in Dench's inquiry, one can infer the evolution of a social representation over time as a function of the representational project the social representation achieves for participant subjects. In the present studies, the social representation of securing a livelihood by getting intimate with a foreign ruler transpires under historical analysis of the Maltese. This representational core is what the Maltese recognise in their own kind when in Britain, and from which they seek dissociation. It is this evolutionary adaptation of the social representation that marks its change over historical time from a transcendental ideal at one point in time to a despicable and corrupt practice at a later point, from which present Maltese immigrants seek dissociation. The representation is not activated in relations both with other communities in Britain and with other Maltese outside of Britain. It is this idea that has become lodged and identifiable in Maltese collective remembering.

At this point, therefore, we can present the following epidemiological time-series model accounting for context-specific social relations amongst the Maltese in London empirically documented above (Table 1): At time 1, a social representation of Maltese-foreigner relations (based on chivalric love, which was founded on values of honour and security) evolved to sexual entertainment with British marines at time 2 (post-war years) and was exported to London at time 3 amongst the Maltese community in London (during this period the values of security and autonomy were brought to the fore and change meaning), as justification for the organization of a vice-network (the values of autonomy and security are used by the Maltese migrants to distance themselves from the old ways of life). At time 4 (present) the representation is recognized by Maltese who seek to dissociate themselves from fellow Maltese immigrants for fear they end up getting involved in the wrong affairs. At this point, the representation of getting by getting intimate with foreign rulers has become a loathed self-stereotype amongst the Maltese, and justifies a preference for assimilation acculturation strategies in Britain over other forms.

It appears, therefore, that the reverence associated with chivalric love and the honour it bestowed in medieval times were merely peripheral elements, whilst economic fortitude constituted the representation's core, seeing that it is this aspect of the social representation of concubinage that has survived. This is in line with the postulates of CNT. Indeed, were it not so, the very representation of chivalric love in its original form would have been challenged by the common instances of sinful degeneration of these relations into sexual consummation, as the many Maltese surnames that survive today and that trace their lineage to the knights attests. In spite of such transgressions, the representation of chivalric love remained serving its purpose (or project), and insofar as this purpose was intimacy/economic wellbeing as opposed to holiness, the challenge of sin could not obliterate its meaning, as indeed

Table 1 Epidemiological time-series model of social representation of Maltese-foreign relations over history

	Historical epoch	Setting	Social Behaviour	Values
Time 1	Medieval Times	Malta	Chivalric Love	Honour, Security
Time 2	After-war years	Malta	Sexual entertainment	Security, Survival
Time 3	After-war years	London	Sexual entertainment (illicit)	Security, Autonomy
Time 4	Contemporary	London	Dissociation from fellow countrymen	Security, Autonomy, Respect

it didn't. Moreover, the changes that have occurred in the social representation have ensued situational and political changes in the social reality of the Maltese and their project of self-sustenance. This is also in line with what the toblerone-model predicates. All of this suggests, therefore, that from the Maltese perspective, the core of the social representation of chivalric love was more to do with economic wellbeing than with transcendental worship. Across its evolution, this element was disposed of when later, at a time when no such transcendental aspirations had any currency in public life (i.e. the after-war years), the representation of economic wellbeing through intimate relations with foreign rulers adapted and survived by shedding the peripheral moral aspect. At this point we can note, therefore, that once a representation undergoes some such change in its peripheral elements, this seems to carry forward irreversibly akin to a ratchet effect.

In conclusion, we would also like to tease out specific contributions that the historical analysis undertaken in this paper makes to social psychological theory. Firstly, our analysis demonstrates the identity functions of representational projects, even as these accrue over time. The Maltese in London seem to prefer assimilationist acculturation over integration to preserve a positive social identity. Yet in keeping their Maltese identity and maintaining their Maltese networks in Malta, they seem disposed to change 'ingroups' depending on the contextual features of their migrant relations. Additionally, the case study of the Maltese community in the sixties undertaken by Dench along with the present historical analysis suggest that an outgroup's perceptions of the ingroup have the power to change how the ingroup perceive themselves and who they associate with, and that these perceptions carry over in time due to a ratchet effect even when the outgroup's perceptions themselves change due to changing historical circumstances. This latter point suggests further that one way ingroup identities and self-social representations are formed is by adopting the perspective of the other towards one's own group. Maltese in London disassociate from other Maltese due to their adopting the perspective of the British towards the Maltese during the sixties, which saw certain forms of social behaviour engaged in by the Maltese as despicable, even though for fellow Maltese these might have been justifiable in terms of other values. Finally, the case analysis demonstrates that social representations and associated forms of social behaviour at times 'fail to go away', even when the circumstances that justified their being in a particular historical epoch have changed and no longer warrant their existence.

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